

HIGH PRIORITY SCHOOLS GRANT PROGRAM

GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS AND SECURING IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING

**California Department of Education
Sacramento, California**

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High Priority Schools Grant Program

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High Priority Schools Grant Program

I. General Information

Overview

Assembly Bill 961, Chapter 747, Statutes of 2001, established the High Priority Schools Grant (HPSG) Program for Low Performing Schools. This program is intended to assist the lowest performing schools in the state in raising student achievement by offering additional resources targeted to student performance. All schools that rank in decile 1 according to the statewide 2000 Academic Performance Index (API) and schools with asterisked API scores that would place them in decile 1 were invited to participate in this program. The legislation specifies that by participating in the High Priority Schools Grant Program, schools automatically participate in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) and must meet all of the requirements of II/USP as modified by the HPSG legislation.

Beginning in the 2002-03 fiscal year schools selected to participate in the HPSG program will receive \$400 per student with a \$200 per student matching requirement. Schools currently participating in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) will receive an additional \$200 per student for a total of \$400 per student. The goal of HPSG is to ensure that these additional resources will assist all participating schools in implementing changes to improve pupil performance. Schools have twenty-four months to meet growth targets. Failure to meet growth targets will result in a local public hearing. Lack of significant progress after thirty-six months will result in interventions and sanctions by the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

This Application Packet contains the requirements for the HPSG School Action Plan and the required forms each school must complete and return to the California Department of Education (CDE).

Timeline

In October 2001 districts with schools in decile 1 of the API were invited to have their schools participate in the High Priority Schools Grant Program. By January 15, 2002, districts submitted a one-page application to CDE indicating a request for a planning grant or an intent to apply for immediate implementation funding. The original legislation called for a submittal of the school action plan by March 15, 2002. As of the writing of this guidance, this date is still contained in the legislation, however, CDE is developing a waiver template for schools who wish to have additional time for completing an action plan. **This new date for submission of the Implementation Grant Submission Forms is May 15, 2002. They must be received by 5 p.m.**

All implementation packets received by this date will be reviewed by CDE and, if complete, sent to the State Board of Education for approval in June, with implementation funding beginning in July.

Application packets needing changes or clarifications will be held for additional district information, which must be received by CDE no later than August 1. Revised plans will be sent to the SBE for approval in September, after which time implementation funding for those schools will be released.

II. Developing or Modifying the School Action Plan

The action plan will serve as a blueprint for the school and community to focus on raising student achievement to meet the school's academic growth targets. HPSG allows schools "to use an existing plan instead of the action plan...if that plan meets the requirements pursuant to subdivisions (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), and (i) of [Education Code] Section 52054." [Ed. Code Section 52054.3] Schools currently in II/USP should modify current action plans in accordance with the requirements contained in this section. Schools not in II/USP, but wishing to use an existing school plan or develop an action plan for the first time should review this section carefully to ensure that all required components are contained in the plan.

Role and Responsibilities of the External Evaluator/Other Entity

The responsibilities of the external evaluator or other entity are specified below (see Ed. Code Section 52054). An external evaluator or other entity must:

- 1) inform the parents in writing that the school has been selected to participate in this program due to low-performance;
- 2) hold a public meeting in cooperation with the principal to solicit recommendations and opinions regarding actions that should be taken to improve the performance of the school;
- 3) notify parents and legal guardians of the pupils in the school of their opportunity to provide written recommendations of actions that should be taken to improve the performance of the school;
- 4) complete a review of the school identifying the weaknesses that contribute to the school's below average performance;
- 5) provide technical assistance to the school site;
- 6) make recommendations for improvement; and,
- 7) begin to develop an action plan to improve the academic performance of the students.

Action Plan Teams

The schoolsite council, in partnership with the district, shall develop the HPSG School Action Plan. The SBE has specified that parents and other members of the community must be involved in developing and carrying out the action plan. If the school does not have a schoolsite council, a schoolwide advisory group or school support group that conforms to the requirements of Ed. Code Section 52012 may be used.

Process of Developing the Action Plan

In developing a school action plan, the school and school district shall use the technical assistance from school district personnel, county offices of education, universities, a CDE approved External Evaluator, or any other person or entity that has proven successful expertise specific to the challenges inherent in low-performing schools. The list of approved External Evaluators is available at www.cde.ca.gov/iiusp. Successful action plans are supported by the Action Plan Team, meet the requirements of the legislation and serve to direct the school and community on focused, high impact, school-wide strategies designed to improve the quality of the program provided to students. The Single School Plan for Student Achievement template may be used in developing or modifying action plans providing all of the HPSG program requirements are addressed in the plan. The template may be found at www.cde.ca.gov/ccpdiv/conapp/template.htm.

Action Plan Requirements

A school action plan must be based on the following as specified in Ed. Code Section 52055.620.

- 1) It shall be research based and data driven.
- 2) It shall include ongoing data gathering for the purposes of this program so that progress can be measured and verified and the plan can be modified based on the data.
- 3) It shall be grounded in the findings from an initial needs assessment.
- 4) It shall show evidence of a commitment by the school community to implement the plan. The plan shall describe how this commitment will be demonstrated.
- 5) It shall make clear that there is a heightening of expectations on the part of all personnel associated with the schoolsite that all children can learn and every school can succeed.
- 6) It shall ensure that an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning is provided at the schoolsite.
- 7) It shall identify additional human, financial, and other resources available to the school to be used in the implementation of the school action plan.

If the school currently has an existing action plan under II/USP, this plan will need to be modified by adding the responses to Items 15-18 only. If the school is utilizing an existing plan such as the Single School Plan for Student Achievement in lieu of developing a new plan, please review to ensure all required components are included in the plan.

The legislation and the SBE specify that an action plan shall:

1. Identify the current barriers at the school and district toward improvements in pupil academic achievement, and underlying causes for low achievement.
2. Identify school wide and district wide strategies for overcoming these barriers.

3. Analyze the disaggregated pupil achievement data and other indicators to determine whether all groups and types of pupils make adequate academic progress toward short-term growth targets and long-term performance goals. The disaggregated data addressed in the plan shall, at a minimum, provide information regarding the achievement of: English language learners; pupils with exceptional needs; pupils who qualify for free and reduced price meals; and all pupils in all numerically significant subgroups identified on the API Base Year Reports.
4. Specify short-term academic objectives pursuant to Ed. Code Section 52052 for a two-year period that will allow the school to make adequate progress toward the growth targets established for pupil achievement as measured by all data available to the school.
5. Set annual academic growth targets at least as high as those adopted by the SBE.
6. Describe how state and local assessments are used to modify instruction and improve student achievement.
7. Indicate whether all students have access to standards-aligned instructional materials approved by the SBE or (for grades 9-12 only) by the local school board. If indicated, discuss how any lack of instructional materials is being addressed.
8. Describe how professional development is provided to all teachers and is aligned to the state core content standards, standards-based instructional materials and is directly related to areas where student academic performance needs improvement.
9. Describe the school's effort to increase the level of parent and guardian involvement.
10. Describe the effective allocation of resources and management of the school linked to overcoming the barriers to increasing student academic achievement.
11. Review and include the school and district conditions identified in the School Accountability Report Card pursuant to Ed. Code Section 33126.
12. Include the number of fully credentialed teachers at each grade level and content area and, if appropriate, how the lack of fully credentialed teachers is being addressed.
13. Review and include the school and school district crime statistics that negatively affect student achievement (Penal Code Section 628.5).
14. Describe the process administrators and teachers will use to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the action plan and its impact on student achievement.
15. Describe a strategy to focus on increasing pupil literacy and achievement, with necessary attention to English language learners (ELL). At a minimum this strategy shall include a plan to achieve the following goals:
 - (A) Each pupil will be provided appropriate instructional materials aligned with academic and content standards adopted by SBE as required by law.

- (B) Each subgroup will demonstrate increased achievement based upon API results by the end of the implementation period.
- (C) Each ELL will demonstrate increased performance based on the ELD test required by Ed. Code Section 60810 and the achievement test required pursuant to Ed. Code Section 60640.

16. Describe a strategy to attract, retain, and fairly distribute the highest quality staff at the school. At a minimum this strategy shall include teachers, administrators, and support staff, and shall include a plan to achieve the following goals:
 - (A) An increase in the number of credentialed teachers working at the school site.
 - (B) An increase in or targeting of professional development opportunities for teachers related to the goals of the action plan and ELD standards adopted by SBE aligned with academic content and performance standards, including but not limited to, participation in professional development institutes, consistent with Chapter 737, (AB 466) Statutes of 2001.
 - (C) By the end of the implementation period, successful completion by school site administrators of a program designed to maximize leadership skills, consistent with Chapter 697, (AB 75) Statutes of 2001.
17. Describe a strategy to change the culture of the school community to recognize parents and guardians as partners in the education of their children and to prepare and educate parents and guardians in the learning and academic progress of their children. At a minimum this strategy shall include:
 - (A) A commitment to develop a school-parent compact as required in Ed. Code Section 51101.
 - (B) A plan to achieve the goal of maintaining or increasing the number and frequency of personal parent and guardian contacts each year at the school site.
 - (C) School-home communications designed to promote parent and guardian support for meeting state standards and core curriculum components.
18. Address the issues of facilities, curriculum, instructional materials and support services by describing a strategy to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning and that includes the development of a high quality curriculum and instruction aligned with the academic content and performance standards adopted pursuant to Ed. Code Section 60605 and ELD standards adopted pursuant to Ed. Code Section 60811. At a minimum this strategy shall include the goal of providing adequate logistical support including, but not limited to, curriculum, quality instructional materials, support services and supplies for every pupil.

III. Documentation Required for Implementation Grant Awards

The information to be returned to CDE should include:

District Application for Funding

- 1) School Cover Page
- 2) Action Plan Team Member's Signature Page
- 3) Budget Pages
- 4) General Assurances

- 5) HPSG Assurances (Forms 5a, 5b, 5c)
- 6) Specific Legal Assurances
- 7) Drug Free Workplace Certification
- Six Page Narrative Summary

The Action Plan should be retained at the school site. CDE may request the plan for review if questions arise regarding the information submitted.

Please mail your completed packet to:

**California Department of Education
High Priority Schools Grant Program Office
P. O. Box 944272
Sacramento, California 94244-2720**

Packets must be received by 5 p.m. on May 15, 2002.

Narrative Summary

Responses to the Narrative Summary should be based on the Action Plan the school has developed or modified to meet the requirements of HPSG. CDE will review all narratives with respect to these seven areas, and evaluate them for completeness, coherence and integrity to the program requirements. Responses will be reviewed holistically and rated "pass" or "not pass." Responses that are complete, thoughtful, and reflect the legal requirements of the State Board of Education will be rated "pass". Please be succinct and limit your responses to a total of six pages. Individual responses to each question may vary in length, as long as the total number of pages does not exceed six.

- 1) How will state and local assessments be used to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan and the impact on student achievement?*
- 2) What specific approaches or strategies did the school select to improve student achievement in reading/language arts? Why were these approaches selected?*
- 3) What specific approaches or strategies did the school select to improve student achievement in mathematics? Why were these approaches selected?*
- 4) How will the school, for grades K-8, provide every student with SBE adopted instructional materials; for grades 9-12, with standards-aligned instructional materials? Include the provision of state-adopted instructional materials that address the special needs of English Learners.*
- 5) What actions will the school take to reduce the number of under-credentialed and inexperienced teachers to at least the district average? Please describe how the proposed program will address the lack of fully certificated teachers in any area (grade and/or subject area, including teachers for English Learners).*
- 6. How will professional development that addresses standards-based instruction, including State Board-approved instructional materials that are in use at the school, be provided to all teachers? (For high schools, professional development must*

address standard-based instruction and the use of standards-aligned instructional materials.)

7. *How will the school ensure increased parental involvement?*

Application Packet Review

All Application Packets must be completed and submitted to CDE by May 15, 2002 by 5 p.m. CDE will review and make a recommendation to the SBE for approval. The complete School Action Plan should remain at the school site unless requested for review by CDE.

In order for CDE to recommend approval to the SBE, each Application Packet must include the Narrative Summary, and all required forms. Please retain the School Action Plan and Component Checklist at the school. Local Education Agencies that submit incomplete or unsatisfactory Application Packets will be required to provide additional information, which may result in a delay in implementation grant approval.

Grant Award Process

Grant Award letters will be sent to superintendents. Within 10 days of receipt of the Grant Award letter the superintendent or his/her designee must sign and return the Certification of Acceptance of Grant Conditions forms to the CDE. Upon receipt of all required documents in the grant award letter, CDE will initiate payment.

Implementation grants are paid in two equal installments of 40 percent of the grant amount. The final implementation payment is made after review and approval of the final annual expenditure report that is due to the CDE on August 31. The actual payment cycle typically takes four to six weeks from the date CDE initiates the payment process.

IV. Frequently Asked Questions

Specific Provisions

Q. How was eligibility for the High Priority Schools Program (HPSG) determined?

A. Schools in decile ranks 1-5 of the Academic Performance Index were eligible to apply. Since funding is limited, CDE invited only schools in decile rank 1 to apply. Schools which rank at the bottom of decile 1 will have first priority for funding.

Q. What specific changes does HPSG make in the current II/USP process?

A. The role of the district is greater under HPSG than under II/USP, and the requirement for a public hearing is new. Schools have a longer length of time in which to improve student achievement. Funding is allocated at \$400 rather than at \$200 per pupil. Initial implementation timelines are compressed, but an existing action plan may be used as long as it contains all the required elements needed. The planning grant is optional, and requirements for the selection of external evaluator have broadened. Under the HPSG program sanctions may be imposed at the district level as well as at

the school level. Although both programs allow schools in decile ranks 1-5 to participate, priority under HPSG shifts to the lowest ranked schools in decile 1.

Q. We are already in II/USP and received a planning grant. We have also been invited to apply for HPSG. May we use the same external evaluator?

A. Yes, you may use the same external evaluator that you used for II/USP. However, the school will not receive an additional planning grant.

Q. We currently have an action plan developed under II/USP. What else must be included in the HP action plan?

A. There are four additional components required. Each of the components has subgoals which can be achieved using a variety of options. The main components are: Pupil Literacy and Achievement; Quality of the Staff; Parental Involvement; and, Facilities, Curriculum, Instructional Materials and Support Services.

Q. What is the role of the district in this process?

A. The district is very involved in this process. It must schedule the public hearings required for participation in the program, and work with the schools that do participate in the development of their plan. All fiscal records must be kept at the district, and the district must submit all required reports to CDE. If school interventions are necessary, CDE will work with the district to improve the performance of the school, and if sanctions are necessary, the district may have action taken against it.

Q. How will participation in this program affect collective bargaining agreements?

A. HPSG specifies that the action plan shall include a strategy, jointly developed by the district and the exclusive bargaining representative of the certificated employees of the district, for addressing the distribution of experienced credentialed teachers throughout the district. It further states that this collaboration shall take place outside of collective bargaining (see Ed. Code Section 52055.630 (c)).

Q. I have questions regarding implementation of AB 75 and AB 466, which are required under HPSG. Who can I call for clarification of these two pieces of legislation?

A. For information or clarification on Chapter 737 (AB 466) call the Reading/Language Arts Office at 916.323.6269; on Chapter 697 (AB 75) call Patty Stevens at 916.323.5838 or Jerilyn Harris at 916.323.6230 of the Professional Development Unit.

Fiscal

Q. When will we receive planning and implementation grants?

A. Planning grants will be issued in March 2002. Implementation grant funding will begin July 1, 2002. The actual payment cycle typically takes four to six weeks from the date the High Priority Schools Grant Program Office initiates the payment process.

Q. What is the matching fund requirement for the HPSG program?

A. All HPSG applicants are required to participate in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). HPSG grants are allocated at \$200 per student (using 2000-01 CBEDS enrollment data) and \$200 per student for II/USP, for a total of \$400 per student. A match of \$200 per student is required to meet

the matching funds requirement of the II/USP portion of the combined total grant. II/USP funds must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

In general, match may be generated from any fund source that does not specifically restrict it from being used as a match. Examples of acceptable match include Title I funds or monetary gifts to the school. Unacceptable match includes in-kind contributions such as the cost of utilities, or the amortized value of the school buildings. Many schools use categorical or general funds to meet this requirement.

Q. Is the per pupil funding for all students in a school, or must students meet eligibility criteria?

A. All students in a school are eligible for services under the HPSG action plans, and will be included in the per pupil calculation for funding. To determine your school's funding level use the certified enrollment count from the CBEDS for the 2000-01 school year.

Q. What are the guidelines for expenditure of the money under HPSG? Are there any restrictions?

A. HPSG planning funds may be used for any activity associated with development of an action plan designed to enhance student achievement. Once the action plan is developed and implemented, expenditures must support the activities and strategies contained in the approved action plan and proposed budget.

Q. Is carry-over allowed?

A. Carryover of unexpended planning grant funds is allowable from the planning year into the first year of implementation only. Carryover of unexpended implementation funds is not allowable from one fiscal year to the next.

Q. May indirect costs be charged to the grant?

A. Indirect costs may be charged using the J-380 Annual Program Cost Data Report. The approved indirect cost rates for Local Educational Agencies can be accessed at www.cde.ca.gov/SFDIV/Financial/ICR.htm.

Q. If a school is in II/USP Cohort 1 and applies for HPSG funding, is the new funding available for the next three years with the possibility of a fourth year?

A. No. If a Cohort 1 school is eligible for a third year of II/USP funding due to significant progress in meeting its growth target, it will also be eligible for HPSG funding during that year. HP does not extend the II/USP status for an additional three years, nor can a school "start over" with HP.

Charter and Alternative Schools

Q. When eligibility criteria that pertain to public schools are met, are charter schools among the schools that may participate in the II/USP or the HPSG program?

A. Yes. Charter schools are eligible to voluntarily participate in these programs.

Q. Can a school district require a charter school to participate in the II/USP or the HPSG program?

A. A charter authorizing entity, usually a school district or county office of education, does have supervisory and oversight responsibilities over the charter. The authorizing entity is responsible for verifying that the terms of the charter are met, that the program is consistent with applicable state and federal statute, and the charter presents a sound educational program. If a charter fails to meet or exceed pupil outcomes identified in the charter, the charter authorizing entity is responsible for taking corrective action up to and including revocation of the charter. Corrective action in such case could include participation in the II/USP or the HPSG program.

If the charter authorizing entity determines that students are not making acceptable academic progress, the charter school and the authorizing entity may jointly determine that participation in the II/USP or the HPSG program would support the charter school in developing and implementing necessary reforms to prevent revocation of the charter.

Q. Is a charter school required to hold a public hearing to discuss whether or not to apply and, if they choose not to apply, discuss their reasons and rationale for not accepting the invitation to participate?

A. No. Consistent with Ed. Code Section 47610, charter schools are exempt from the vast majority of laws governing school districts, including this requirement. However, a charter school may choose to have a public hearing; it is an option but not a requirement.

Q. If a charter school wishes to apply to participate in the II/USP or the HPSG program, are the terms of the legislation applicable to the charter school?

A. Yes. If a charter school voluntarily chooses to participate in either of these state categorical programs, they must comply with all program requirements. In the case of a locally funded charter school, the school district refers to the charter's authorizing entity, which typically is either a school district or a county office of education and in rare instances the State Board of Education. If a charter school is directly funded, they function as their own LEA for purposes of these programs and carry out the role of the school district internally.

Q. If a charter school is selected to participate in the II/USP or the HPSG categorical program, are program funds dispersed directly to the charter school?

A. It depends. Charter schools that have selected to be direct funded are allowed to apply for and receive funds independently from a Local Educational Agency (LEA). However, charter schools that have selected local funded designation apply for and receive funds through a LEA.

Accountability and Sanctions

Q. Is an II/USP Cohort 1 school that elects to participate in HPSG subject to the II/USP sanctions or the HPSG sanctions? What about a Cohort 2 school? A Cohort 3 school?

A. Schools in Cohorts 1 and 2 which decide to participate in HPSG will remain on the initial timeline established by II/USP. A Cohort 3 school participating in HPSG will follow the HPSG timeline.

Q. What corrective actions are specified for HPSG schools?

A. A school participating in the program must meet its growth target within 24 months, or be subject to a review by the State Board of Education. The Superintendent of Public Instruction may direct the local governing board to assist the school in achieving their target. After 36 months a school that has not demonstrated significant progress may be required to contract with a School Assistance and Intervention Team which will make recommendations and monitor a school's progress. Schools that fail to meet significant growth shall be also be subject to the sanctions as provided in the II/USP program.

HPSG List of Action Plan Components

This form is provided as a checklist to ensure all Action Plan requirements are easily found. Please indicate the page number where each requirement may be found. Please retain this form at the school site in the event of future review by CDE.

	Page
1. Identify the current barriers at the school and district toward improvement in pupil academic achievement and underlying causes for low achievement.	
2. Identify school wide and district wide strategies for overcoming these barriers.	
3. Describe how the disaggregated pupil achievement data and other indicators will be used, including whether all groups and types of pupils make adequate academic progress toward short-term growth targets and long-term performance goals.	
4. Set and include short-term academic objectives pursuant to Section 52052 for a two-year period that will allow the school to make adequate progress toward the growth targets established for pupil achievement.	
5. Set annual academic growth targets at least as high as those adopted by the SBE.	
6. Describe how state and local assessments are used to modify instruction and improve student achievement.	
7. Describe each student's access to complete sets of standards-aligned, SBE or local school board (for grades 9-12 only) approved instructional materials and if appropriate how any lack of instructional materials is being addressed.	
8. Describe how professional development is provided to all teachers and is aligned to the state core content standards, standards-based instructional materials and directly related to areas where student academic performance needs improvement.	
9. Describe the school's effort to improve the involvement of parents and guardians.	
10. Describe the effective allocation of resources and management of the school linked to overcoming the barriers to student academic achievement.	
11. Review and include the school and district conditions identified in the School Accountability Report Card pursuant to Section 33126.	
12. Include the number of fully credentialed teachers at each grade level and content area and, if appropriate, how the lack of fully credentialed teachers is being addressed.	
13. Review and include the school and school district crime statistics that negatively affect student achievement (Section 628.5 of the Penal Code).	
14. Describe the process administrators and teachers will use to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan and its impact on student achievement.	
15. Describe a strategy to focus on pupil literacy and achievement, with special focus on English Language Learners.	
16. Describe a strategy to attract, retain, and fairly distribute the highest quality staff at the school.	
17. Describe a strategy to change the culture of the school community to recognize parents and guardians as partners in the education of their children.	
18. Address facilities, curriculum, instructional materials and support services by describing strategies to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.	

High Priority Schools Grant Program

Implementation Grant Forms

Please submit an original and two copies to:

**California Department of Education
School Improvement Division
High Priority Schools Grant Program Office
P.O. Box 944272
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720**

These documents must be received by **May 15, 2002**

Please do not fax or e-mail these documents.

The District Application should be followed by the complete School Application (Forms 1 through 6, plus the six page Narrative).

Required Sequence

District Application for Funding

Form 1---School Cover and Signature Page

Form 2---Action Plan Team Member's Signature Page

Form 3---Budget Page

Form 3a--Budget Page

Form 4---General Assurances

Form 5---HPSG Assurances (Forms 5a, 5b, 5c)

Form 6---Drug Free Workplace Certification

Six page Narrative Summary